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CURRENT OPINION

The Problem of the Church's Function

Writing in the *Advance* of November 11, 1915, Rev. Ozora S. Davis, D.D., president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, discusses a recent editorial in the *Ladies' Home Journal* announcing a series of constructive articles on the church, and presents some timely thoughts on the subject of the church's function. The editorial in question has suggested that the church must choose whether it will devote itself to spiritual work or to social service if it is to maintain its authority. But Dr. Davis points out that the problem before the church is not the doing of the one thing to the exclusion of the other, but the doing of both, with the right emphasis laid upon each. "Public worship, preaching, and the cure of souls is the supreme but not the sole business of the church. Philanthropic and social service is also an integral part of the large function that the living church is to discharge in the community. Neither must be given up; both must be done; but the right relation must be maintained and defined between the two."

The paramount function of the church is to meet the needs of the souls of men as they seek to know the truth about God and goodness, as they crave comfort and help in their sorrows and disappointments, as they yearn for inspiration in their daily life. There is no other source to which men can go for aid. But it is cruel to give a man a vision of a better life and then send him back to the same old surroundings. The church is also concerned with the task of changing the environment of the "saved" individual. In the words of Professor Graham Taylor, "Conditions need to be evangelized so as to become at least compatible with and not destructive of the Christian ideals and standards of life."

This means simply an enlargement of the scope of the church's motives, not a change of its purpose. The burden of the world becomes a part of the burden of souls. The problem is one of balance and control.

The Sovereignty of Service

"The present is a time when the world is beginning to realize, somewhat vaguely perhaps and dimly and with a kind of subconscious sense, the value and need of religion, not only in the smaller sphere of private aim and effort, but also in the larger sphere of all social relations and all human interests." Such is the introductory statement of Bishop David H. Greer, D.D., in the recent convention address published in the *Living Church* of November 13, 1915.

The organized force which has been working hitherto in the world's life is not a will to service but a will to power. The pragmatic verdict is, however, that having been tried out, it has been found not to work. Instead of making for order, harmony, and peace, it has made for confusion, discord, strife, and war, both national and social. But another kind of will has come into the world; not a will to power, but a will to service. It came with Jesus Christ; and when, on the night of his betrayal, he girded himself with a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet, he taught by that vivid example that the church's sovereignty in the world is the sovereignty of service. Time and again in the history of Christendom this ideal has been expressed in some of the best and noblest types of character and life; it has been seen too in the church's ministrations to human need and lack and suffering and want. And yet the church must give something more than an ambulance service to the modern life of the world, splendid as is that form of service; it must make the whole structural

fabric of our modern life to rest and stand on God as its only sure foundation, its only safe and sure and permanent support. And by God the writer means Jesus Christ, for he does not know any other God. The God of nature, the cosmic God, is too great to be understood by man. But we *can* understand him through the Word of God, that is, Jesus Christ. "And the supreme need of the hour which it is the business of the church to meet is to try to put that Word of God for this world, that service Word of God, into this world's life, and so to give its true moral worth and value, its moral progress to it, its human progress to it."

The writer then mentions three ways in which his church is serving the public good: the nation-wide preaching mission, which he describes as a consciously concerted and co-operative movement to preach Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to individuals and to the nation; the new penology, which aims to conserve and to utilize the waste of human life that has hitherto been cast away as refuse; and the temperance movement, which is a social-service question, affecting not only the welfare of the individual but the welfare of society. He pleads specially for a voluntary total abstinence from alcoholic liquors. "Now is the day as never before for the Christian church and every branch of the Christian church, with enmity toward none and charity for all, to address itself to the task of trying to establish in the life of the modern world the sovereignty of Him who came to help and save the world by His service to it."

The Ethics of Competition

The individualists and the socialists constitute two schools of thought in their attitude toward competition, writes F. A. Leitch, D.D., in an article contributed to the *Methodist Review* of September-October, 1915. The former tell us that civilization

depends for its stability upon the premise "sacredness of property," and that all aggressive human activity has as a supreme motive the economic incentive for gain; self-interest is the key to progress. The latter deny that the supreme incentive for life and progress is the economic incentive for gain; they maintain that a civilization built upon this doctrine and practice cannot stand, and never has stood, the strain of experience; the race makes its permanent gains through the altruistic, social attitude.

The writer then proceeds to discuss the two theories. The ethics of competition finds its center and circumference in the dual nature of man. The physical, animal side of man is individual and self-centered. The primitive savage works for himself; competition is for him a fight for physical existence; ethics represents to him an unknown factor. As civilization advances, however, and a social organism is developed, the individual, self-centered element declines and the ethical develops. "Sense" with its cry of "me and mine" gives way to "ethics" with its altruism of "thee and thine." Competition, like all other social activities, is a growth of social organism. It has reached its highest development in our modern industrial system whereby the members of society have become wonderfully interdependent. Vast combinations have arisen to eliminate competition in the interests of public welfare, but too often these have developed into monopolies which are selfish and individualistic in the highest degree. Now it is a fundamental principle of all civil procedures that the public welfare is the supreme law. The ethics of competition must then represent the ethics or fundamental principle of social salvation. Man must lose his individual, self-centered life in the larger social life. After all, the supreme mission of business is not to make money but to make manhood. Human necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, create commerce, and through commerce

men are brought together, relationships are established, and through these man finds his larger, richer, and fuller life. And so the ethics of competition resolves itself into a fundamental moral question. Business is not primarily a mercenary struggle for economic supremacy, but rather a sacrament of service that aims to save life and redeem the world from the tyranny of social injustice, social inequality, and godless selfishness that has written its history in the blood and anguish of an oppressed humanity.

The Epistles of the Captivity: Where Were They Written?

That the recent theory which attempts to establish Ephesus as the place where the so-called "Epistles of the Captivity" were written is by no means as fanciful as may appear at first sight is the contention of Rev. Maurice Jones, D.D., in an article in the *London Expositor* for October, 1915. Until recently criticism as a whole was gradually crystallizing in favor of the Roman imprisonment being the factor which governed the composition of these letters, although the claims of Caesarea as the place where the Colossian-Ephesian-Philemon group was written have had strong advocates. But the writer sees little to support the Caesarean theory, and accordingly accepts the alternative, "Rome or Ephesus."

The argument in favor of an Ephesian imprisonment is supported by the New Testament writings as found in the Book of Acts, in First and Second Corinthians, and in Romans, chap. 16. This is supplemented by a threefold external tradition: (1) there still exists at Ephesus a Greek tower called St. Paul's Prison; (2) an account of St. Paul's imprisonment is contained in the "Acts of Paul and Thekla," a document regarded by Ramsay as generally trustworthy in its historical details; (3) the theory is confirmed by the Monarchian

Prologues, short introductions to the Pauline Epistles published in some versions of the Vulgate. The writer concludes after discussing this evidence at some length that the balance of probabilities is decidedly against any imprisonment at Ephesus of the length and importance demanded by the implications of the "Epistles of the Captivity," although it is quite possible that the apostle may have been subjected to a confinement of some kind there.

But granting an Ephesian imprisonment, which of the "Epistles of the Captivity" were written there? The difficulties in the way are too great to permit of a convincing argument in favor of placing the composition of the Colossian-Ephesian-Philemon group at Ephesus, but the case in favor of the Epistle to the Philippians stands on a much sounder footing, and the arguments are telling almost to the point of conviction. A summary of the arguments of the German scholar, Professor M. Albertz, is then given and discussed. Several serious objections are raised against this theory: (1) the argument based on style (which is one of Albertz' strongest points) is not convincing; (2) there is no reference in the Epistle to the "collection for the saints," an omission which is unthinkable, in view of the extent to which the apostle's mind was bent upon this matter at the time when, according to this theory, the Epistle was written; (3) the tone of joy and gratitude apparent in the Epistle to the Philippians stands in striking contrast to the attitude reflected in the other Epistles with which this theory would bring it into close touch; (4) the situation suits Rome better than Ephesus. The conclusion is that "the theory depends upon so many conjectures and suppositions which in the case of the Roman theory are certainties that, in spite of Albertz' splendid advocacy, I can see no sound reason for abandoning the position generally held that the Epistle was written during St. Paul's Roman captivity."

The Fellowship of Reconciliation

Henry T. Hodgkin writes in *Present Day Papers* for November, 1915, of a new movement which took shape in England at the beginning of the present year to draw together persons in various religious bodies who believe that war is contrary to Christianity. It began by the coming together of a group of personal friends who felt impelled to go forward and call others of like mind. They had no intention at first of forming a new society; they only felt that they were moved of God to take one step, and so, step by step, they went forward, calling together at the end of last year about one hundred and thirty persons, who met at Cambridge. It seemed to them that there was laid upon them as followers of Christ the burden of proclaiming without flinching a loyalty to Christ and humanity which dare not surrender the highest ideals for the human race by using ostensibly for their furtherance a method which in its essence denies and destroys them. A committee appointed at this conference continued for some months to meet every week for a whole day of prayer, and as a result the Fellowship of Reconciliation was formed, largely through personal touch of one to another, until a group of from three to four thousand are now united for the furtherance of these ideals. A second conference was held in July and was followed by a campaign in which many members went about the country preaching, not simply the message of peace, but what they conceived to be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The members of the Fellowship believe that the participation in war is under all circumstances forbidden to them as Christians, but they also protest against many things in the national life which seem to them contrary to the teaching of Christ. Further, they believe in the principle that evil can be overcome by the power of love, and that it is the duty and privilege of Christian men and women so to yield their

lives to the love of God that they become dynamic for the overcoming of evil wherever they may meet it. Thus they oppose the stand of the great majority of people who believe that war was the least evil in the crisis that faced the nation in the summer of 1914. They maintain that for the Christian there is no necessary evil, but that he is called, not only to believe in the ultimate ideal of good, but to set himself here and now to practice that ideal, even though the ideal cannot be understood and those who practice it are in danger of apparently irretrievable disaster. They believe that the upward movement of mankind is to be achieved, not by a carefully worked out adjustment between the ideal and the immediately practicable, but by the dynamic influence of perhaps the very few who yield themselves wholly to the demands of the ideal. They recall the promise of the Master, "Fear not, *little* flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom." They believe that the future rests, not with the big battalions, but with the little flock.

Tendencies in Christology

The modern reaction against the Christology of the ancient church, as definitively formulated at Chalcedon, has been inspired by two principle motives, writes Rev. J. K. Mozley, of Cambridge, in an article in the *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1915. The first of these was the desire for a doctrine which should adequately and not simply formally express the truth, written large over the Synoptic picture, that, whatever else the history of Jesus was, he was man—more than that, *a* man, an individual. The second motive was the sense of the impossibility on every ground, historical, psychological, and religious, of conceiving of such a demarkation of the divine and the human in the person of Christ that two natures, involving two different sets of experiences, two different states of

consciousness, and two wills, existed side by side in one subject of them all.

The Chalcedonian definition stated and implied that the Son of God, true God, the second person of the holy Trinity, was incarnate in this sense, that he united himself with human nature, taking to himself, not through some heavenly creation, but from the moment of conception in the womb of Mary, a human body and soul. Of that human nature, as of his own eternal divine nature, he was always the subject. As a person, he was neither human nor divine-human, but simply divine. This doctrine is supported in the Gospels by a fivefold proof: the whole of the Fourth Gospel which assumes that Christ is God in the fullest sense; the witness of Christ's power as seen in his miracles; the witness of his supernatural knowledge; the witness of his self-consciousness of a special relation with the Father; and the witness of his sinlessness. Modernism, however, tends to minimize these arguments and in the opinion of the writer the speculations and restatements which have been put forward recently in England, dating from and including Dr. Sanday's irenic book on *Christologies Ancient and Modern* (1909), may prove less and less compatible with the substance of the old confession of Christ's deity. Dr. Sanday suggested a new method of conceiving the relationship of Deity and humanity in the one Christ by availing himself of one of the most modern of psychological ideas, that of the subliminal consciousness. The line of demarkation is said to be horizontal rather than vertical. It is suggested that the subliminal consciousness is the proper locus of the incarnate Lord's divinity, and that from time to time, on occasions and under conditions observable in the gospel history, there passed thence into his mind uprushes of a deeper self-consciousness than any that formed the normal content of that mind. This theory immediately provoked dis-

cussion and criticism, but in the light of later events it seems to mark the beginning of an epoch for theology in England. Alongside of, and often in close connection with, these efforts to find new and more valid categories for Christology there has gone a treatment of the Gospels, the result of which has been to reduce the full force of those *momenta* in the records which have been long regarded as providing firm supports for the doctrine of Christ's deity. The writer confesses that he cannot range himself with those who minimize the danger which awaits the substance, and not simply the form, of the old Christology from the modern method of handling the Gospels.

The Message of Daniel for Our Time

In the *International Journal of Apocrypha* of July, Dr. W. E. Orchard writes on "The Significance of Jewish Apocalypse." Any reader of the Bible is conscious of a great gap between the Old and New Testaments, not only in the absence of all history of the Jewish people from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah until the birth of Christ, but also in the development of doctrine. It is indeed necessary to read round the Bible as well as in it and particularly to know something of the vast literature produced by the Jews at this period which saw the formation of Judaism. The Apocrypha are some of these books which were received by the Alexandrian Jews but excluded by the Palestinian Jews. On the whole, the Apocrypha witness to the Hellenizing of Jewish thought and to a certain extent prepare us for an understanding of the more speculative elements in our New Testament, represented especially by the Fourth Gospel, the Epistles of Paul, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is another class of books belonging to that period even less generally known: they are called sometimes pseudepigrapha and sometimes apocalypses. They are called pseudepigrapha because they

bear an assumed name, as do indeed many of the writings of the Old Testament. They were called apocalypses because they claimed to have been given by special revelation to the author and purposed to set forth the hidden meaning of current events and their immediate development. The Old Testament contains one definitely apocalyptic book—the Book of Daniel, which was written about 370 years before the date it assumes. The book has an abiding value much greater than the story of the dramatic adventures of Daniel and his compatriots in Babylon; it passes judgment upon the world-empires of the time and condemns them in their methods of conquest. The author believes that the gospel of the mailed fist is not to drown the preaching of the tidings of a spiritual kingdom, whose symbol is not a cruel and rapacious creature, but a man, a perfect man in the image of God. The fulfilment is far enough today, but we feel strongly at this critical time in the history of the world that the vision of Daniel is the only one that contains any hope for us.

A Pioneer in New Testament Criticism

The *Bibliotheca Sacra* for October, 1915, contains a paper by Professor E. S. Buchanan on "A New Bible Text from Spain." Mr. Buchanan has specialized for many years in the study of Old Latin versions of the New Testament and has reached striking conclusions. The Vulgate would be the local Roman form which New Testament writings came to assume at the close of the fourth century. At the time when Jerome began his work there was no uniformity among Latin translations of the Scriptures: through him and his patron Damasus,

bishop of Rome, an Alexandrian type of text has come to prevail in our Bible. This text has been in modern times "canonized" (in the words of Mr. Buchanan) by Tischendorf and Hort (Mr. Buchanan does not mention von Soden's unsuccessful venture). Was Jerome's Greek text the original Greek? Alexandria was a nursery for heresies ever since the second century and we may suspect that it is the home of the earliest and most serious corruptions of the New Testament. Mr. Buchanan's remarkable theory is that the influence of the authorized Vulgate was not likely to be felt so strongly in localities removed from Rome, and that even late Latin manuscripts of Spain and Ireland would probably preserve ancient readings of the Old Latin Versions. Indeed, in many cases the Old Latin text has been erased and corrected to make it conform to the Vulgate. Mr. Buchanan's conclusion is that much remains to be done in the field of textual research; we are *not able* to establish today the exact letter of Scripture. "Textual discoveries have set us free from slavery to the letter that killeth, and made us ready (let us hope) for a stricter obedience in the future to the life-giving Spirit." Mr. Buchanan's article strikes a new note in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. It is very probable that several of its readers will appreciate his article and feel like Uzza when he put forth his hand to hold the ark of the Lord (I Chron., 13:9). Given a few more men among conservative scholars taking Mr. Buchanan's attitude and we shall feel that we understand each other better. The sooner readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* and (let us say) the *Biblical World* realize that the letter killeth but the spirit of Christ giveth life, the better it will be for American Christianity.